

## CLAIMS

1. A method for identifying mail pieces for special processing based upon predetermined characteristics, the method comprising the steps of:
  - a) storing a plurality of predetermined profiles, each of the predetermined profiles having at least one image characteristic;
  - b) obtaining at least one image characteristic for an image of a mail piece;
  - c) retrieving one of the predetermined profiles;
  - d) comparing the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece to the at least one image characteristics present in the one of the predetermined profiles;
  - e) identifying the mail piece for special processing, if the at least one image characteristic present in the one of the predetermined profiles substantially matches the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
  - f) repeating steps c) through e) for another one of the plurality of predetermined profiles, if the at least one image characteristic present in the one of the predetermined profiles does not substantially match the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of comparing the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece

to the at least one image characteristic present in the one of the predetermined profiles occurs during real-time processing.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of comparing the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece to the at least one image characteristic present in the one of the predetermined profile occurs during offline processing.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the at least one image characteristic is selected from the group consisting of barcodes, address styles, address resolution, envelope size, initiating processing and distribution center, addressee, postage characteristics, markings, and handwriting characteristics.

6. A system enabling identification of mail pieces based upon predetermined characteristics, the system comprising:

means for obtaining an image of a mail piece;

means for obtaining at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece;

at least one processor;

at least one computer readable memory having:

a) a database storing data for each one of a plurality of predetermined profiles, the data comprising:

an identifier,

at least one image characteristic, and,

an action identifier; and,

b) computer readable code embodied in the at least one computer readable memory, the computer readable code capable of causing the at least one processor to:

retrieve the data for one of the plurality of predetermined profiles from the database,

compare the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece to the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data,

identify the mail piece as requiring the action identified by the action identifier from the retrieved data, if the at least one image characteristic present in the retrieved data substantially matches the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data.

7. The system of claim 6 wherein the computer readable code is further capable of causing the at least one processor to:

retrieve the data corresponding to another predetermined profile from the plurality of predetermined profiles from the database,

compare the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece to the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data,

identify the mail piece as requiring the action identified by the action identifier from the retrieved data, if the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data substantially matches the at least

one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece.

8. The system of claim 6 further comprising:

means for communicating with a network.

9. The system of claim 8 further comprising:

a remote server capable of receiving and sending data.

10. The system of claim 7 wherein the at least one image characteristic is selected from the group consisting of barcodes, address styles, address resolution, envelope size, initiating processing and distribution center, addressee, postage characteristics, markings, and handwriting characteristics.

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11. A system enabling identification of mail pieces based upon predetermined characteristics, the system comprising:

means for obtaining an image of a mail piece;

means for obtaining at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece;

at least one processor;

a first memory for storing data for access by a process executed by at least one processor, said memory comprising:  
a database storing data for each one of a plurality of predetermined profiles, the data comprising:

an identifier,

at least one image characteristic, and,

an action identifier;

at least one second memory having computer readable code embodied therein, the computer readable code capable of causing the at least one processor to:

retrieve the data for one of the plurality of predetermined profiles from the database,

compare the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece to the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data,

identify the mail piece as requiring the action identified by the action identifier from the retrieved data, if the at least one image characteristic present in the retrieved data substantially matches the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data.

12. The system of claim 11 wherein the computer readable code is further capable of causing the at least one processor to:

retrieve the data corresponding to another predetermined profile from the plurality of predetermined profiles from the database,

compare the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece to the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data,

identify the mail piece as requiring the action identified by the action identifier from the retrieved data, if the at least one image characteristic from

the retrieved data substantially matches the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece.

13. The system of claim 11 further comprising:  
means for communicating with a network.
14. The system of claim 13 further comprising:  
a remote server capable of receiving and sending data.
15. The system of claim 11 wherein the at least one image characteristic is selected from the group consisting of barcodes, address styles, address resolution, envelope size, initiating processing and distribution center, addressee, postage characteristics, markings, and handwriting characteristics.
16. The system of claim 14 wherein the remote server includes :  
at least one third memory having computer readable code embodied therein, the computer readable code capable of causing the at least one processor to:  
retrieve the data for one of the plurality of predetermined profiles from the database,  
compare the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece to the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data,  
identify the mail piece as requiring the action identified by the action identifier from the retrieved data, if the at least one image characteristic present in the retrieved data

substantially matches the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data.

17. The system of claim 16 wherein the computer readable code is further capable of causing the at least one processor to: retrieve the data corresponding to another predetermined profile from the plurality of predetermined profiles from the database,

compare the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece to the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data,

identify the mail piece as requiring the action identified by the action identifier from the retrieved data, if the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data substantially matches the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece.

18. The system of claim 14 further comprising :  
a fourth memory for storing data for access by a process executed by the remote server, said memory including a database.

19. The method of claim 1 wherein the mail piece comprises a hand addressed mail piece;  
wherein the at least one image characteristic comprises at least one handwriting characteristic; and,  
wherein said one of the predetermined profiles comprises at least one distinguishing handwriting characteristic for one individual.

20. The system of claim 6 wherein the mail piece comprises a hand addressed mail piece; wherein the at least one image characteristic comprises at least one handwriting characteristic; and, wherein said one of the predetermined profiles comprises at least one distinguishing handwriting characteristic for one individual.

21. The system of claim 11 wherein the mail piece comprises a hand addressed mail piece; wherein the at least one image characteristic comprises at least one handwriting characteristic; and, wherein said one of the predetermined profiles comprises at least one distinguishing handwriting characteristic for one individual.

22. A system for processing mail items and identifying mail items for special processing comprising:

a transport sub-system capable of transporting a mail item;

an imaging sub-system capable of obtaining an image of the mail piece;

means for storing a plurality of predetermined profiles, each of the predetermined profiles having at least one image characteristic;

means for obtaining at least one image characteristic for an image of the mail piece;

means for retrieving one of the predetermined profiles;

means for comparing the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece to the at least one image characteristics present in the one of the predetermined profiles;

means for identifying the mail piece for special processing, if the at least one image characteristic present in the one of the predetermined profiles substantially matches the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece.

23. The system of claim 22 further comprising:

means for retrieving the data corresponding to another predetermined profile from the plurality of predetermined profiles from the database,

means for comparing the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece to the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data,

means for identifying the mail piece as requiring the action identified by the action identifier from the retrieved data, if the at least one image characteristic from the retrieved data substantially matches the at least one image characteristic for the image of the mail piece.

24. The system of claim 22 wherein the at least one image characteristic is selected from the group consisting of barcodes, address styles, address resolution, envelope size, initiating processing and distribution center, addressee, postage characteristics, markings, and handwriting characteristics.
25. The system of claim 22 further comprising:  
means for communicating with a network.
26. The system of claim 25 further comprising:  
a remote server capable of receiving and sending data.
27. The system of claim 22 wherein the mail piece comprises a hand addressed mail piece;  
wherein the at least one image characteristic comprises at least one handwriting characteristic; and,  
wherein said one of the predetermined profiles comprises at least one distinguishing handwriting characteristic for one individual.